

## INVESTIGATING THE COLLOCATION OF THE WORDS 'MOM' AND 'DAD' IN ALEC GREVEN'S NOVELS: A CORPUS LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SEMANTIC PREFERENCES AND PROSODY

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**Abstract:** This research delves into the collocation and semantic analysis of the words "Mom" and "Dad" in two novels, "How to Talk to Mom?" and "How to Talk to Dad?", authored by a teenage male writer, Alec Greven. The primary objective is to investigate the frequency of occurrence of these parental terms and explore their semantic preferences and prosody within the context of dictions used in the novels. The study uses a mixed-method design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Using corpus linguistic methods, the study examines the frequency of the words "Mom" and "Dad" in each novel, revealing that "Mom" occurs more frequently than "Dad." Through concordance hits, the collocational patterns of the parental terms are analyzed, shedding light on the contexts in which they are commonly used. The collocation analysis demonstrates that "Dad" is frequently associated with family, friendship, and engaging activities, while "Mom" is linked to family, household chores, and maternal preferences. Furthermore, the research explores the semantic prosody of "Mom" and "Dad" revealing that "Dad" is portrayed more positively compared to "Mom."

**Keywords:** *collocation; corpus linguistics; parental language use; semantic preferences; semantic prosody; teenage novels.*

### INTRODUCTION

In society, our behavior often reflects gender-related influences, impacting our language choices and patterns. Gender plays a pivotal role in shaping language preferences, particularly within the family, the fundamental unit of society. Within the family, language choices vary based on parent-child relationships. These language preferences are inherently linked to parental roles within the family context. This study aims to investigate how parental roles and responsibilities influence language patterns, shedding light on the impact of these roles on language preferences and usage within the family dynamic. This provides insights into how parental roles may shape language preferences and usage within the family dynamic (Dunifon & Kowaleski-Jones (2021). Understanding the intricacies of

parental language use and its impact on children's development is crucial, as it sheds light on the factors that shape children's cognitive, affective, and linguistic growth.

Understanding parental language use is crucial, as it directly affects children's development, encompassing cognitive, affective, and linguistic growth. Recent research by Huttenlocher et al. (2020) underscores the vital role of parent-child language interactions in children's language development and cognitive skills. Responsive and stimulating parent-child interactions foster cognitive and language abilities (Rowe, 2022). While McHale et al. (2021) investigate the impact of interactions between parents and children on children's emotional regulation and social competence, Hoff (2021) highlights the significant effects of parental input and linguistic richness on

children's vocabulary acquisition and language processing skills.

Parental interactions significantly shape children's cognitive, affective, and linguistic development. Rowe (2018) emphasizes the significance of responsive and stimulating parents-children interactions. Positive parent-child interactions, characterized by warmth, sensitivity, and engagement, contribute significantly to children's socio-emotional development (Pomerantz et al., 2019). The home environment, as the initial learning environment for children, profoundly influences their cognitive and socio-emotional development. The Family Process Model (FPM) by Fiese and Winter (2018) highlights the importance of the family context, including parent-child interactions, routines, and communication patterns, in shaping children's development. The home environment provides critical opportunities for children to acquire knowledge, develop language skills, and form beliefs and attitudes, particularly those related to gender.

Gender awareness emerges early in childhood and is influenced by parental interactions and societal factors. Halim et al. (2019) emphasize parents' role in transmitting gender norms and stereotypes to children through language, play, and socialization practices. Parents' beliefs and behaviors regarding gender significantly impact children's cognitive, affective, and linguistic development, shaping their understanding of gender roles and identities. Zhang (2018) investigates gender representation and its effect on identity formation in Chinese English textbooks, focusing on how gender roles, stereotypes, and identities are portrayed and reinforced through language and visual depictions. Consequently, language development is intricately linked to the acquisition of gendered language patterns, encompassing gender-specific vocabulary, syntax, and speech styles acquired through interactions with parents and caregivers (Lieberman & Myers, 2019). In line with the ideas presented above, Yuliawati (2014) highlights the role of lexical elements in communication within speech communities.

The development of technology, particularly computer and internet technology, has transformed linguistic research, leading it into the digital realm since the 1960s. The availability of large corpora and tools for data collection and analysis has facilitated quick and comprehensive investigations. Corpus linguistics, as a domain, encompasses a set of stages and methods for linguistic research (Hardie & McEnery, 2021). Collocation, according to Firth (1957), refers to the essential aspect of word meaning that is not intended as an isolated word but as a word that appears within a structure alongside other units with significant occurrence rates. Furthermore, preference semantics, as defined by Stubbs (2019), refers to the holistic relationship between lemmas or word forms and semantically related word strands. Semantic prosody is the tendency of a word's meaning to be influenced by the words surrounding it within a specific context. Traditional semantics adherents, Hardie & McEnery (2021), state that prosodic semantics is associated with connotative meaning, wherein a word or phrase can have either positive or negative connotations depending on the lexical items accompanying it. In this study, the lexical elements that pivot on the meaning field of mom and dad will be identified using the corpus linguistic method. The use of the corpus linguistic method can reveal information related to the actual use of language in the novel HTMs? and HTDs? Vocabulary with high occurrence frequency and its colloquial can be obtained. This information is then used as a basis for reference to see what vocabulary tends to be used for a particular topic. Based on this analysis, information can also be obtained about how mom and dad are described in the novel HTMs? and HTDs? This research is expected to provide information about the different representations between mom and dad in the two novels above. Therefore, by considering the influence of parental interactions and the home environment on children's cognitive, affective, and linguistic development, as well as the development of

gender awareness, this research aims to explore the role of parental language use and the portrayal of parental figures in the novels.

**METHOD**

In order to give both breadth and depth of understanding and evidence, this study adopted a mixed-method design of research, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies. (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2021). According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2019), the purpose of using mixed research methods is to broaden and strengthen the conclusions drawn from the data. This approach allows for the collection of information in the form of numbers (quantitative data) and text (qualitative data) through the use of the AntConc corpus analysis tool (Anthony, 2019). AntConc is a freely available, multi-platform, and multi-functional tool designed for classroom learning purposes and enables both quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

The corpus data used in this study comprises excerpts from two novels, authored by ten-year-old Alec Greven. The total corpus size is less than one million words, with the novel "HTMs?" consisting of 551-word types and 1945-word tokens, and "HTDs?" comprising 567-word types and 1906-word tokens. The relatively balanced use of words in both novels indicates that the author possesses comparable abilities to express ideas, opinions, and feelings when discussing interactions with mothers and fathers, showcasing a relatively equal reference experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2021).

Data collection was conducted using the AntConc corpus analysis tool, which facilitated the quantitative analysis of word frequency and collocation patterns. Concordance hits were generated to identify the co-occurring words with "mom" and "dad" in their respective contexts, followed by qualitative interpretation of the topics discussed in relation to these collocations (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2020). The frequency analysis provided insights into the prominence of the words "mom" and "dad" in

each novel, while the collocation analysis revealed the words most frequently associated with each parental figure (Creswell & Creswell, 2021).

To determine the semantic preferences and prosody of "mom" and "dad" in the corpus, the researchers examined the words and phrases that co-occurred with these parental terms. This approach was inspired by Stubbs (2019), who defined preference semantics as the holistic relationship between lemmas or word forms and semantically related word strands. The researchers further explored semantic prosody, which refers to the tendency of a word's meaning to be influenced by the words surrounding it within a specific context (Sinclair, 1991; Anthony, 2019).

Overall, the mixed-method design allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the portrayal of parental figures in the novels "HTMs?" and "HTDs?" The integration of quantitative and qualitative data analysis enriched the findings and provided valuable insights into the contrasting representations of mothers and fathers in the two novels (Creswell & Creswell, 2021; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2019).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Table 1. *Word types and word tokens*

	<i>How to Talk to Moms</i>	<i>How to Talk to Dads</i>
Word Types	551	1945
Word Tokens	567	1906

HTDs? has 1906-word tokens and 567-word types, whereas HTMs? has 1945-word tokens and 551-word types. The use of the number of words by this ten-year-old writer is relatively balanced. This shows that the writer's ability to express ideas, opinions, and feelings when talking about how to talk to father and mother more or less has a relatively equal reference experience. In the novel HTDs? there are 15 more-word types compared to the novel HTMs? However, the number of word tokens in the novel HTMs? has more than 39-word tokens.

The analysis of word types and word tokens in both novels, "HTMs?" and "HTDs?", provides insight into the writer's

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lexical diversity and overall expression. The difference in the number of word types and word tokens suggests that the writer exhibits a balanced utilization of vocabulary in both novels. This equilibrium signifies the writer's competence in expressing ideas, opinions, and emotions related to interactions with both parents. The relatively equal distribution of word types and tokens indicates that the writer possesses a comparable range of linguistic resources when discussing interactions with fathers and mothers.

Interestingly, despite the slight difference in word types, "HTMs?" contains more word tokens than "HTDs?". This could imply that the writer elaborates more within the context of interactions with mothers, resulting in a higher total word count. It might suggest that when discussing mother-related themes, the writer delves into more nuanced details, expanding on experiences and emotions.

Table 2. *Frequency*

	<i>How to Talk to Moms?</i>	<i>How to Talk to Dads?</i>	<i>Both Novels</i>
Dad	1	60	61
Mom	36	15	51
Moms	44	2	46

Based on the observation that the term "mom" or "moms" occurs more frequently than the word "dad." The data displayed on the AntConc device show the word dads appears 61 times while the word 97 times, the word mom is discussed more than the word dad. Based on the context in the corpus, the term "dad" is used with does something, the bad side, teach history, likes doing, thinks longer, different from mom, bug, never complain, fight, easy-going, better mood, milk, games, tricks and won't let you quit. On the other hand, mom appears with the words of action like, fix, do, understand, think, love, like, and don't like While nouns that are found are trouble, food, perfume, job, cookies, opinion, and thing. The adjectives found are tougher, smart, easygoing, and clean. Analyzing the frequency of the words "dad," "mom," and "moms" reveals a notable difference in their occurrences. The word "mom" and its variations appear more frequently than the word "dad." The word

"dad" appears 61 times, while "mom" appears 97 times, further accentuating the dominance of discussions related to mothers.

It shows that the conversation about mom is more dominant than dad. It can be interpreted that the author has more experiences with his mother than with his father. The writer's closeness to his parents will affect his ability to describe and explain his physical experiences, thoughts, and feelings with people who spend more time with him or the experiences obtained are very memorable so that more to say about fathers.

On the one hand, the context surrounding the word "dad" involves activities, likes, characteristics, and interactions that exhibit a variety of aspects of fatherly presence. This could suggest that the writer portrays his father as a multifaceted figure with involvement in different facets of life. Meanwhile, the word "mom" is associated with a range of emotions, thoughts, and activities, indicating the depth and variety of experiences shared with the mother. On the other hand, the observed prominence of the word "mom" and its variations suggests that the writer's interactions and experiences with the mother figure play a more significant role in his narrative. This could stem from a closer emotional connection, more vivid memories, or a greater amount of time spent with the mother. The writer's inclination to discuss experiences related to the mother in more detail might indicate a stronger bond or a more vivid recollection of moments shared with her.

The findings highlight the writer's emotional closeness to his parents, which can influence how he describes and elaborates on his experiences, thoughts, and feelings. The emphasis on interactions with the mother could imply that her role in the writer's life is more pronounced, possibly due to the nature of their relationship or shared activities. This thematic disparity offers a glimpse into the writer's perspective on family dynamics and his unique experiences with both parents. Overall, these findings underscore the significance of the parent-child relationship and how it shapes linguistic expression,

highlighting the role of emotions and shared experiences in language use.

Table 3. *Concordance hit*

No	How to Talk to Dads
1	Dad also likes you to learn from your mistakes.
2	Dad also sweeps things under the rug more than
3	Dad expects you to do things even when he
4	Dad expects you to do things even when he
5	dad get into a fight, 75 percent of the time
6	Dad gives you one scoop of ice cream and
7	Dad has a good side and a bad side.
8	dad helps you become you. Dad wants you to
9	dad helps you become you. RO ay / o
10	Dad helps you make the right decisions. Unless it
11	Dad is an easy-going guy who's going to
12	Dad is smart—he'll look really depressed and
13	Dad is tattling. When it comes to tattling, proceed
14	dad knows. That can be a clean-up nightmare.
15	Dad lets you play an inappropriate video game, do
16	Dad likes to leave a lot of the decisions
17	Dad." Never bug or complain. This sends Dad to
18	Dad on his good side. . . . You could get rewards. }
19	Dad on his good side. If he goes bad,
20	Dad's Way { Dads are softies with little girls
21	Dad's Way... 6.0. ee eee 7 Chapter Two: The Two
22	Dad's way is a little different from Mom'
23	Dad's way makes it easier to have f
24	Dad tells you that you can choose to do
25	Dad tells you to do whatever you want. But
26	Dad wants to teach you the history of the
27	dad wants you to do something and you want
28	Dad wants you to do things on your own
29	Dad will be very mad at you and there
30	Dad will go to the good side and you
31	Dad will go to the bad side. Then all
32	Dad will say, "Bummer." Dad's goal is for
33	Dad will say yes when your mom might say
34	Dad won't go easy on you. He will
35	Dad won't let you. When you fall off

There are 60 concordance hit data and 35 data are displayed whose frequency appears more than once. Looking at the context, dad is discussed as follows: (1) Four descriptions of dad through adjectives that appear after the word dad, namely easy going, smart, depressed, and, tattling (2) Following is the description of dad through the phrasal verbs that come after dad: likes you to learn, lets you play, likes to leave, asks you to do

something, likes doing, drinking out of the milk jug, Never bug or complain, tells you that you can choose, tells you to do whatever you want, thinks about things longer than Mom, Try to keep, uses, know, wants to teach, wants you to do something, wants you to do things on our own, will go to the good side, will go to the bad side, say, "Bummer.", say yes when your mom might say, won't go easy, won't let you. (3) The description of dad through possessive adjectives is dad's goals, dad's way, dad's way, dad's way is a little different from mom, dad's way makes it easier.

The concordance hit analysis provides a detailed examination of the context in which the word "dad" is used throughout the text "HTDs." By analyzing the surrounding words and phrases, patterns emerge that offer insights into the writer's portrayal of the father figure. The findings reveal several key themes related to the word "dad": (1) Positive Attributes: The writer often associates positive adjectives with "dad," such as "easy-going," "smart," and "good." These descriptors create a favourable impression of the father's personality. (2) Involvement: The writer discusses various activities and interactions involving the father, such as playing games, offering guidance, making decisions, and teaching history. This suggests an active and engaged father figure. (3) Contrasts: The word "dad" is contrasted with "mom" in certain contexts, highlighting differences in parenting styles, decision-making, and emotional expressions. (4) Encouragement and Motivation: The writer depicts the father as someone who encourages taking risks, making independent decisions, and becoming a better individual. (5) Challenges: Some contexts mention challenges or disagreements, such as not letting children quit, being tough, and occasionally expressing dissatisfaction. (6) Collectively, the discussions surrounding the word "dad" portray a multifaceted figure who is supportive, intelligent, and involved in various aspects of the writer's life. This characterization emphasizes a sense of encouragement, guidance, and distinctness from the mother figure.

Based on the word or phrase that comes after the adjectives, dad is represented as someone sociable, intelligent, moody, chattering. There are three positive dad characters and one negative dad character. But overall the father's character is summarized as a pleasant individual because he is easy to get along with, intelligent and likes to chatter. Meanwhile, if seen from the description of the father through the verbs that appear after the word dad is represented as someone who gives

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a surprise, motivates to take risks, encourages him to be brave and independent, such as lets you play, likes doing, drinking out of the milk jug, never bug or complain, wants you to do things on our own. Judging from the use of possessive adjectives used, father is represented as someone who has attitudes and principles. This is indicated by the use of the phrases dad's goal and dad's way which appear four times.

From the explanation above, the semantic preference of the word dad is discussed about the theme of family, friendship, and fun activities. The semantic prosody of the word dad is positively seen from the meaning that appears when it is connected with other words in their context.

Table 4. *Concordance hit*

No	How to Talk to Moms
5	mom asks you to clean. If it is a
6	mom asks you to clean your little brother's
7	mom asks you to do something and offers you
8	mom asks you to do something and offers a
10	mom does for you and what you can do
11	mom doesn't get mad. If you do make
15	mom is a really, really hard job because we
16	Mom is mean and wants to ruin your life. }
17	mom is trying to ruin your life when she
18	mom is wonderful when she is doing something nice
19	mom job is hard. If you go to the
20	mom likes and doesn't like. If you understand
21	mom mad, get in big trouble, and still have
23	Mom's flowers, or make your concoctions in Mom'
24	Mom's perfume or food, you are probably going
25	Mom's things (like the birdbath or the fountain).
27	mom says, "If you clean up the living room,
28	mom seems like the most wonderful woman in the
29	mom, she still loves you. That's the best
30	mom smile if you take a shower and comb
31	mom wants you to do, 95 percent of the time
32	mom will go nuts. And you will get in
33	mom will probably make you stay in bed all
34	mom, you won't get in trouble as much.

From the data above, the discussion about mom is obtained which is grouped as follows: (1) Mom is described through adjective phrases that appear after the word mom, namely hard job, mean, wonderful, good mood, and mad. (2) Dad is described with a phrasal verb that appears: mom asks, does, doesn't get mad, is trying to ruin, says, smile wants, will go nuts, make you stay in bed.

(3) The description of dad through possessive adjectives is mom's flower, mom's perfume, and mom's things.

Similarly, the concordance hit analysis for the word "mom" in "How to Talk to Moms" provides a detailed view of the contexts in which the writer uses this words. Key themes emerge from the analysis of the word "mom": (1) Responsibility: The writer often associates the word "mom" with responsibilities, such as asking to clean, taking care of siblings, and expecting tasks to be done. (2) Emotional Range: The word "mom" is connected to a wide range of emotions, including being mean, wonderful, understanding, and sometimes mad. (3) Nurturing: The writer discusses activities that involve nurturing, such as making food, fixing things, and offering comfort. (4) Comparison: Similar to the analysis of "dad," the writer contrasts "mom" with "dad," highlighting differences in their behaviors, preferences, and interactions. (5) Guidance: The writer portrays the mother as someone who offers guidance, opinions, and insights on various matters.

In summary, the discussions related to the word "mom" paint a picture of a complex figure who juggles responsibilities, exhibits a range of emotions, and provides guidance. The characterization emphasizes the nurturing and supportive aspects of the mother figure, showcasing her involvement in the writer's daily life and decision-making processes.

Mom is represented by words such as hard job, mean, wonderful, and mad. The author's experience of interacting with mom is stated in his novel that mom is a difficult job, being evil, angry and admirable. Interestingly, there are three negative traits and one positive trait describing mom. In general, the representation of mom is less pleasant. While the description of mom through the use of verbs, it is found that four ask verbs are used, besides that, there are verbs, wants, make you stay in bed which are used as orders to do activities. So, mom is represented as a parent who likes to tell children with quite a variety of verb uses when compared to dad. Another depiction is through the verbs get mad and is trying to ruin. The two phraseological verbs follow the word mom and have a negative meaning. The use of smile and love verbs indicates a pleasant and beautiful experience between the writer and his mother. Regarding possessive adjectives, the word mom is associated with material things, such as mom's flower, mom's perfume, and mom's things. In short, the

semantic preferences of the word *mom* are discussed with the theme of family, homework, and mother's preferences. The semantic prosody of the word *mom* is positively seen from the meaning that appears when it is connected with other words in its context.

The nuanced discussions surrounding both "dad" and "mom" provide a comprehensive understanding of the writer's perceptions of his parents. The positive attributes associated with "dad" and the nurturing qualities attributed to "mom" reflect a well-rounded representation of both parental figures. The contrasts drawn between the two figures highlight their unique roles and interactions in the writer's life. These findings emphasize the importance of language in conveying the writer's relationship with each parent. The distinct ways in which the writer discusses "dad" and "mom" suggest different levels of intimacy, experiences, and emotional connections with each parent. The analysis underscores the richness of the writer's experiences and emotions, providing readers with insights into his family dynamics and the roles his parents play in his life.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of word types and word tokens in both novels, "HTMs?" and "HTDs?", indicates that the ten-year-old writer has maintained a relatively balanced use of words. This suggests that the writer possesses the ability to express ideas, opinions, and feelings concerning both parents fairly equally. The novel "HTDs?" contains a slightly higher number of word types compared to "HTMs?", but the latter has more word tokens. Analyzing the frequency of certain words, it is evident that the word "mom" and its variations appear more frequently than the word "dad." This observation underscores the dominance of discussions related to mothers. The contexts in which the parental words are used reveal that the writer's experiences and interactions with his mother are more prominent than those with his father. Various contexts portray the father as sociable, intelligent, moody, and encouraging of independence, while the mother is depicted as having a hard job, sometimes mean, but also wonderful and loving.

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